

Agenda Report

DATE: AUGUST 11, 2003
TO: CITY COUNCIL
FROM: CITY MANAGER
SUBJECT: ESTABLISHMENT OF A HEIGHT LIMIT OVERLAY DISTRICT AND ADOPTION OF THE HEIGHT LIMIT OVERLAY DISTRICT IN ZONING STUDY AREAS 1-C, 2, AND 12

RECOMMENDATION It is recommended that the City Council, following a public hearing:

1. Approve the Initial Environmental Study and Negative Declaration (Attachment 1);
2. Approve the De Minimis Impact Finding on the State Fish and Wildlife Habitat (Attachment 2);
3. Approve a zoning code amendment to establish a Height Limit Overlay District in the Pasadena Municipal Code;
4. Approve application of the Height Limit Overlay District in three RM-32 and PD-8 districts in Zoning Study Areas 1-C, 2, and 12;
5. Find that establishment of the Height Overlay District and its specific provisions and adoption of the Height Limit Overlay District in Zoning Study Areas 1-C, 2, and 12 are consistent with the goals, objectives and policies of the General Plan and the purposes of the Pasadena Municipal Code Title 17 (Zoning), as outlined in the body of the report;
6. Direct the City Attorney to prepare an ordinance amending the Pasadena Municipal Code to establish the Height Limit Overlay District and amending the official zoning map of the City of Pasadena established by Section 17.08.040 of the Pasadena Municipal Code for the Height Limit Overlay District in Zoning Study Areas 1-C, 2, and 12.

PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

On June 23, 2003, the Planning Commission unanimously approved the establishment of a Height Limit Overlay District and its adoption in zoning study areas 1-C, 2 and 12 as shown in the enclosed maps (Attachment 3). The Commission also recommended that staff coordinate the proposed change with other anticipated revisions of the City of Gardens Ordinance, which should be presented to the Commission in the future.

BACKGROUND

On April 28, 2003, the City Council directed staff to initiate zoning code and zoning map amendments (1) to establish an overlay district that would limit multifamily development projects that are subject to the RM-32 standards within the overlay district to heights of 23 feet to the top plate and 32 feet to the highest ridgeline and also (2) to adopt the overlay district for RM-32 and PD-8 parcels within three zoning study areas: 1-C, 2, and 12.

During the study of the three areas, staff had identified the height limit overlay district as a means of protecting the character of existing neighborhoods from incompatible development. This study took place during a moratorium on demolitions of residential development. Study of the areas concluded that the existing RM-32 and PD-8 districts allow the appropriate density of development but that heights should be limited to two stories.

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Height Limit Overlay District: The proposed Height Limit Overlay District would limit heights at the rear of larger RM-32 parcels to two stories, rather than the three stories now permitted. It would limit development at the rear of affected parcels to 23 feet at the top plate and 32 feet at the highest ridgeline. A limit of 23 feet to the top plate, where the roof and the outside wall intersect, has the effect of limiting a structure to two stories. The proposed Height Limit Overlay District would affect only parcels in an RM-32 district that are 60 feet or more in width. It would amend the zoning code to add the option of an overlay district for RM-32 City of Gardens base districts. The table below illustrates how the proposed height limit overlay is different from the City of Gardens standards:

Parcel width	City of Gardens RM32 Height Limit	Proposed Height Limit Overlay
Less than 60 ft	32 ft to highest ridgeline, 23 ft to top plate (allows 2 stories)	No change
60 ft or more		
Front 60%	24 ft to highest ridgeline, no limit on top plate	No change
Rear 40%	36 ft to highest ridgeline, no limit on top plate (allows 3 stories)	32 ft to highest ridgeline, 23 ft to top plate (allows 2 stories)
First 15 ft behind required front yard	One story if more than 50% of buildings on blockface of same side and opposite side is one story	No change

Under the City of Gardens development standards, the maximum height for development in an RM-32 district varies depending on the width of the particular parcel. For parcels with widths of less than 60 feet, the limit is 23 feet to the top plate and 32 feet to the highest ridgeline. These parcels would not be affected by the overlay district, because they are currently limited to two stories.

For parcels with widths of 60 feet or more the height limit for the front 60 percent of the parcel is 24 feet to the highest ridgeline, with no limit on the top plate. For the rear 40 percent, however, the limit is 36 feet, again with no limit on the top plate, thus allowing three stories. The proposed overlay district would reduce the height at the rear 40 percent of the parcel to two stories.

The proposed overlay district would not affect the limits for the front 60 percent on the wider parcels, which is already limited to two stories. The City of Gardens standards also limit heights for the first fifteen feet behind the required front yard area according to heights of other buildings on the blockface. If more than 50 percent of the buildings on the blockface of the project and of the blockface on the opposite side of the street have a one-story element at the street, the project is limited to one story for a distance of 15 feet behind the required front yard. Otherwise,

the basic height limits for the parcel control the height at the front. This one-story limit would not be affected by the overlay district.

Zoning Study Area 1-C: The affected parcels within Zoning Study Area 1-C are in an area that extends from Altadena Drive on the west to San Gabriel Boulevard on the east and includes 34 parcels. (See Attachment 3). Densities within the RM-32 district vary from single-family densities to densities above 32 units per acre. Existing buildings are one and two stories, across the full range of densities in the area.

Within Area 1-C, the RM-32 zoning district adjoins an RM-16 district north of Morningside Street, creating greater likelihood that three-story RM-32 development could occur immediately adjacent to one or two-story development in the RM-16 district. This relationship indicates the need to reduce the potential height of development in the rear 40 percent of parcels in the RM-32 district in this area. The overlay would limit the height of RM-32 development to maintain compatibility with the character of development in the area.

Zoning Study Area 2: Study Area 2 (Attachment 3) includes the 69 parcels that are zoned either RM-32 or PD-8 within the area bounded by Marengo Avenue and Euclid Avenue, Alpine Street and Wallis Street. Of the 69 parcels, 57 parcels are zoned RM-32 and 12 parcels are PD-8, also permitting 32 units per acre. Adjacent to the Study Area to the east, parcels are zoned single-family residential (RS-6). As a result, the proximity of RM-32 development to the small RS-6 parcels creates the potential for incompatible development.

A limit of two stories will assure greater compatibility between new development projects and the existing single-family neighborhood on Euclid Avenue.

Zoning Study Area 12: Study Area 12, generally bounded by Allendale Road, Marengo Avenue and Euclid Avenue (Attachment 3) includes a total of 41 parcels. Of the 41 parcels, 33 parcels are zoned for single-family houses, RS-6. Another parcel and a portion of a second are zoned PS for public or semi-public space. Seven parcels are located, in whole or in part, within the RM-32 district and were the focus of the study.

All of the existing multifamily development in Study Area 12 has a height of two stories. The rear areas of eight single-family, small, RS-6, parcels abut the RM-32 district. Houses on the eight single-family parcels are one story in height.

The two-story overlay district will assure compatibility between the height of any future development within the RM-32 district and the single-family parcels that abut the rear portions of certain RM-32 parcels.

CONSISTENCY WITH THE GENERAL PLAN

The proposed zoning code provisions and zoning map amendments are consistent with the city's General Plan and purposes of the zoning code and will advance the specific Land Use Element and Housing Element objectives and policies listed below:

Land Use Objective 5 – CHARACTER AND SCALE OF PASADENA: Preservation of Pasadena's character and scale, including its traditional urban design form and historic character, shall be given highest priority in the consideration of future development.

Land Use Policy 5.4 – Neighborhood Character and Identity: Urban design programs, including principles and guidelines, shall recognize, maintain and enhance the character and identity of existing residential and commercial neighborhoods.

Housing Policy 1.1 – Preserve the character, scale, and quality of established residential neighborhoods.

CONSISTENCY WITH THE ZONING CODE

The proposed zoning code amendment and zoning map amendments are consistent with the specific purposes of the Zoning Code's Chapter 17.24 RM Multifamily (City of Gardens) Residential Districts, which include:

Relate new development to the existing environment in scale, material and character so that Pasadena's inherent human scale, visual and functional diversity may be maintained and enhanced.

NEIGHBORHOOD MEETINGS

A neighborhood meeting was held for each of the three study areas: Area 1-C on May 13, 2003; Area 2 on May 15, 2003, and Area 12 on May 7, 2003. Participants gave strong support to the proposed overlay district, though one attendee at the meeting for Area 1-C opposed it strongly.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

An Initial Environmental Study prepared for the proposed zoning code amendment and zone changes determined that the proposed changes will not have a significant impact on the environment, thus, a Negative Declaration is recommended.

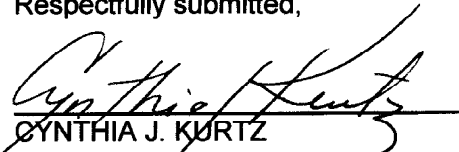
HOUSING IMPACT

There will be no impact on housing because application of the Height Limit Overlay will only restrict the height of development at the rear of parcels with a width of 60 feet or more if they are subject to RM-32 standards. The number of units in the affected districts will not be reduced.


FISCAL IMPACT

The proposed Height Limit Overlay district would not restrict the number of units permitted on RM-32 sites. Therefore, fees based on number of units will remain the same. The overlay district, however, will limit the number of stories; thus, the fees based on project valuation may vary according to the floor area of projects.

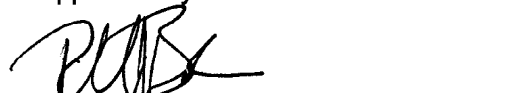
Respectfully submitted,


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